

Editorial

Anthony Giddens' account of social modernity gives prominence to the process of globalisation, which he defines as "a decoupling of space and time" (Giddens, 1990, 79). Globalisation takes place on a world scale, affects all levels of society, and re-structures and interconnects local events. The development of modern sport can also be analysed as a phenomenon of globalisation – although historically sport has been closely linked to nation building and seen as strongly contributing to the expression of national and local identities. Sport is not only subject to, but is also an agent of the process of globalisation. Joseph Maguire (2005) pictures modern sport as bound in a global network of interdependency chains that are marked by global flows and uneven power relations. The closely connected phenomena of the global reach of sport (homogenisation of rules, differentiation of types of sport), the development of international sporting organisations into global players, the staging of important global sports events, the global production and commercialisation of sports and the migration movement of athletes are all particularly well documented (Stamm & Lamprecht, 2008).

The discussion of globalisation and its effects in sport has already given intensive impetus to sport sociology research and provided a wide spectrum of theoretical and empirical work on sport in relation to aspects of globalisation. The range of current research work around the topic of "sport in globalised societies – changes and challenges" was clearly evident at the 9th conference of the European Association for Sociology of Sport (eass) that took place in Berne, Switzerland in 2012. The call for papers for this special issue based on the conference topic attracted a strong and encouraging response, with twenty-three papers submitted. These papers came from conference participants as well as other scholars. After a rigorous review process, we are pleased to publish these five papers closely linked with the topic. Further papers will be published in regular issues of this journal. The contributions in this collection are from authors from five countries (Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland) and represent various aspects of globalised sport.

The first paper by Rudolf Stichweh gives us a fundamental view of the functional system of sport in a global world, analysing the world system of sport from the perspective of theories of world society and functional differentiation. Major sociological characteristics of the global function system of sport are outlined based on this theoretical framework.

Two papers focus on world sports events in a global society. The study by Julie Borges, Bart Vanreusel and Jeroen Scheerder analyses the geographical diffusion of modern world sports events over six distinct macro-geographical regions through a detailed view of host cities. Their study demonstrates that global diffusion of world sports events can be seen both as a consequence and an agent of globalising physical culture.

With reference to the theoretical concept of social capital, the paper of Marijke Taks contrasts and compares social impacts of non-hallmark events with those of mega sport events and concludes that non-hallmark events may more effectively create (social) sustainable benefits for host communities.

The paper from Dean Barker and his colleagues draws our attention to a critical-constructive reading of the widespread assumptions pertaining to the integrative function of sporting involvement in Switzerland. The authors of this qualitative interview study argue that the integrative discourse in sports is embedded within a broader culturalist discourse that either supports divisive social relations or does little to challenge them. Both instances suggest that changes to the way sport is 'produced' in discourse are necessary if sporting involvement is to positively influence cultural relations.

The final paper by Pietro Palvarini and Simone Tosi focuses on sporting infrastructure associated with general developments of modern global cities. Based on a case study of the new Juventus Stadium in Turin, the study indicates the transformations in football as a consequence of a specific aspect of globalisation.

The various perspectives on sport in a globalised society presented in this special issue introduce a number of theoretical and methodical considerations to the examination of the global phenomenon of sport. We are pleased to present this diverse collection of articles and believe they will enhance our understanding of sport in a global world and provide new directions for continued research in this field. Finally, our particular thanks go to all reviewers for their conscientious reviews and constructive feedback, which has helped to promote the high quality of this special issue.

Sandra Günter, Yvonne Weigelt-Schlesinger & Torsten Schlesinger
(Guest Editors)

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